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United States Department of Agriculture,

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

Seed and Plant Introduction and Distribution,

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RAPE (*Brassica napus*).

A succulent, nutritious forage plant, adapted for growth on deep, rich, warm loams and sandy soils. It is widely cultivated in the northern United States and Canada, where it is used largely for soiling purposes. Under ordinary field conditions the plant reaches a height of from one and one-half to four feet, and the strong-growing roots penetrate the soil to a considerable depth. Rape is best adapted to rather cool, moist climates, such as prevail in portions of Canada and the northern United States. It can, however, be successfully grown as a forage crop in many of the warmer and drier sections. Thus, in favorable seasons or with a small amount of irrigation, excellent crops of rape are grown in Wyoming, Montana, the Dakotas, and other States in the so-called semiarid region; and many instances are on record where good crops have been produced without irrigation, under conditions of drought so severe as to cause the failure of corn and other farm crops. Rape will endure quite severe cold weather, and thus will last a long time after the ordinary pastures succumb to the frost. It is usually ready for use in about eight or ten weeks from the date of seeding. The general practice is to use it as a soiling crop or as pasturage. Sheep and swine may be turned into the field and allowed to remain until the rape is pastured off. Cattle may also be allowed to run in the field, but as they waste so much of the forage by pulling up the plants and trampling them down, it is a better plan to cut the rape with a scythe, or mower and feed it to the animals. With sheep and cattle, care should be taken at first not to allow the animals to eat too much, as there is danger of injury from bloating. Hungry animals should not be allowed to eat their fill, and it is best not to turn them into the rape when the leaves are wet. There is no danger of bloating with swine. It is an excellent plan to have the fields so arranged that the sheep and cattle have access to an open pasture as well as to the rape. Animals should have free access to salt at all times when being pastured on this crop.

Seed-bed.—The land should be prepared by deep and thorough plowing, preferably early in the preceding autumn. With some soils a second plowing should be given in the spring before the seed is sown; but with soils that are naturally loose and mellow, such as are found in portions of the Northwest, a simple stirring of the surface with a cultivator or disk-harrow will often be sufficient. The land should be well pulverized by harrowing before the seed is sown.

Sowing.—Throughout the Northern States generally, seeding may take place from the first of June, or possibly earlier, to the middle or last of July, according to the season and locality. In the South, the seed may be sown in September or early in October. Under favorable conditions, two to three pounds of seed per acre will be sufficient, and it will never be necessary to use more than five pounds per acre. The seed should be planted in drills far enough apart to allow cultivation. In practice, the distance varies, but it is seldom less than 20 inches or more than 32 inches—24 to 28 being, perhaps, the most satisfactory, all things considered.

